FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
CHICAGO HEIGHTS BOULEVARD SITE

Q: What is the Chicago Heights Boulevard Site?

A: The Chicago Heights Boulevard Site is an area of contaminated groundwater, located in an unincorporated area of St. Louis County, Missouri. Regulatory oversight for the site was referred to EPA Region 7 by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in September 2012. The contaminants of concern at this site include a group of chemicals known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Q: Where is the groundwater contamination coming from?

A: Information collected from various investigations indicates that the contamination is coming from the Missouri Metals facility at 9970 Page Avenue. Industrial chemicals used at this location were somehow released on the property and seeped into the groundwater below.

Q: How is the site affecting the neighborhood?

A: Contaminated groundwater has migrated beneath part of the surrounding neighborhood. VOCs in the groundwater can evaporate and may affect the indoor air quality of homes or buildings above the area of groundwater contamination. This is known as vapor intrusion. Test results indicate that several homes in the neighborhood have been impacted by vapor intrusion.

Q: Is my drinking water contaminated?

A: Contrary to rumors and some reports in the news media, EPA has found no reason to indicate there are any health risks posed by drinking, cooking, bathing or otherwise using the City water that is supplied to the Elmwood Park neighborhood.

Q: What is the primary contaminant of concern?

A: The primary contaminant of concern is Trichloroethylene (TCE).

Q: What is TCE?

A: TCE is a colorless liquid solvent. It is odorless at the low concentrations being found in some of the homes in Elmwood Park. TCE is used primarily for cleaning and degreasing metal parts. It has also been used in adhesives, paint thinners, spot removers, and typewriter correction fluid. In the past, it was even used as a surgical anesthetic. Because TCE is used in many industrial, household and hobbyist products, it is not unusual for very low concentrations to be found in indoor air. TCE is one of the most common contaminants found by EPA at groundwater contamination sites around the country. At the Missouri Metals facility, TCE was used to clean aircraft component parts that were manufactured at the facility. TCE is no longer being used at the facility.

Q: What are the health effects of exposure to TCE?

A: Exposure to TCE can cause adverse health effects, especially at high levels. Impacts to the central nervous system, male reproductive system, immune system, kidney and liver function, and the developing fetus have all been reported, as have some fatalities, as a result of exposure to very high concentrations of TCE.

High concentration exposures to TCE have typically occurred in the cases of industrial workers who experienced regular or prolonged exposure to TCE in association with their jobs, and not to persons exposed to TCE because of vapor intrusion in their homes.

Q: What is EPA's plan to address the site?

A: EPA is working with PerkinElmer, Inc., which owns the industrial facility, to plan and conduct additional site investigations and to perform appropriate response and cleanup actions. Since August 2012, vapor mitigation systems have been installed in five homes in the Elmwood Park neighborhood, and indoor air testing has been conducted in the 10 homes closest to the area of known groundwater contamination.

EPA anticipates that additional testing will be conducted in the neighborhood, and it is possible that mitigation systems could be installed in other residences if results of environmental sampling confirm they are needed. EPA is evaluating existing information about groundwater contamination at the site, and will pursue additional investigation and cleanup actions as needed.

Q: Where are the areas of concern?

A: The area of concern is the Missouri Metals facility and Elmwood Park, the residential neighborhood situated generally east and southeast of the facility. To date, volatile organic compounds, including TCE, have been detected in indoor air and/or sump water at 10 residential properties in Elmwood Park. Additional testing is needed to fully define the area of concern.

Q: How many homes in the neighborhood have been tested for TCE vapors?

A: A total of 14 homes have been tested for the presence of TCE in indoor air. Of those homes tested, 4 homes showed no detectable levels of TCE. Of the 10 homes with detectable levels of TCE, only 5 homes showed the presence of TCE above a health-based level of concern.

Vapor mitigation systems have already been installed in five homes. These systems work to remove any vapor intrusion caused by contamination from the groundwater underneath the homes. Indoor air testing will continue in the neighborhood and it is possible that additional mitigation systems will be installed in more homes, depending on the test results.

Q: Will every home in Elmwood Park be tested?

A: Probably not. The homes that need to be tested first include those that are situated above the area of known groundwater contamination. Additional homes that are in close proximity to the

known area of groundwater contamination may also need to be tested. EPA will conduct the testing in a phased approach, and will continue testing until the entire area of impact has been defined.

EPA has reached a tentative settlement agreement with PerkinElmer**,** Inc., the current owner of the industrial property, to begin additional testing at the site. This additional testing will further define the location of the groundwater plume, and it will help EPA determine whether additional homes may be impacted. EPA plans to work outward from the known area of contamination to determine how far the contamination has moved underground.

Q: Is it safe for children in Elmwood Park to play outside?

A: Playing outdoors, in yards or parks, should not pose any risks of exposure to the groundwater contamination. Vapor intrusion is only associated with enclosed spaces or structures (basement or crawl space) that lie above an area of groundwater contamination where vapors can accumulate and become concentrated. In an outdoor setting, vapors will quickly dissipate into the air.

Q: Do I need to move?

A: EPA Region 7 has not determined that there is any need for residents in the Elmwood Park neighborhood to move. As EPA and PerkinElmer continue working to assess and clean up the site, EPA will keep residents and stakeholders informed of progress, including any new information that may be of concern to residents.